



Sweet Potatoes

Fact Sheet



Where did they come from?

Sweet potatoes are native of Central and South America where they served as a staple for the Aztecs in Mexico and the Incas in Peru. Sweet potato remains have been found in caves in Peru, which date back 10,000 to 20,000 years. Christopher Columbus was the first to introduce sweet potatoes to Europe while later explorers introduced sweet potatoes to Asia. They were also a main source of nourishment for early colonial Americans and for soldiers during the Revolutionary War.

Where do they grow?

North Carolina, Louisiana, California, Georgia and New Jersey are the major states for growing sweet potatoes. The major suppliers of sweet potatoes include China, Indonesia, Vietnam and Uganda.

How do they grow?

Sweet potatoes are tropical tubers and are part of the Morning Glory Family. They grow underground just as a carrot and, therefore, are considered to be storage roots. Sweet potatoes generally grow the size of a regular white potato and contain a smooth, thin skin. They are available all year long, but are most abundant in the fall and early winter.

Are they healthy?

- ✎ Contain calcium, potassium, vitamins A, B6 and C
- ✎ Contain virtually no fat and are sodium free
- ✎ Good source of dietary fiber
- ✎ Rated as #1 most nutritional vegetable by the “Center for Science in the Public Interest” (CSPI)

How do you pick a good one?

- ✎ Choose those with a firm, dark, smooth skin
- ✎ Avoid sweet potatoes with wrinkled skins
- ✎ Do not choose those with bruises, sprouts or decayed spots

☺ FUN FACTS! ☺

Sweet Potatoes

Did you know...

- ☺ **Did you know a serving of sweet potatoes contains 327% of your daily need for vitamin A? (More than any other vegetable!)**
- ☺ **Did you know that sweet potatoes and yams are not the same?**
(Yams come from the Yam family and are tubers, like potatoes, while sweet potatoes are considered storage roots, like carrots. Yams also have rough, scaly skin while sweet potatoes have a smooth, thin skin. Yams can grow as long as 7 feet and can weigh up to 150 pounds while sweet potatoes are usually the size of a regular potato. Yams are primarily grown in the Caribbean while sweet potatoes grow in the U.S. Yams do not contain any vitamin A while sweet potatoes are super rich in this vitamin.)
- ☺ **Did you know that there are two varieties of sweet potatoes, pale yellow with a dry flesh and dark orange with a moist flesh?**
- ☺ **Did you know that the orange fleshed sweet potato is the primary one sold in the U.S.?**
- ☺ **Did you know you can eat sweet potatoes raw with dip?**
(They taste like a sweet carrot. They are a super healthy snack!)
- ☺ **Did you know you can eat sweet potato fries?**
(Much healthier than the common white potato French fry!)
- ☺ **Did you know you can also eat baked sweet potatoes?**
- ☺ **Did you know that when you eat a sweet potato you are actually eating a root?**
- ☺ **Did you know that ½ cup of sweet potatoes provides 1 serving from the vegetable group of the Food Guide Pyramid?**
- ☺ **Did you know that sweet potatoes are one of the most nutritious vegetables you can eat as part of your 5 a Day?**
- ☺ **Did you know sweet potatoes should not be refrigerated?**
(If refrigerated, they will develop a hard core and a bad taste. Store in a cool, dry place with temperatures between 55°-60° F.)

Remember ... Include 5 - 9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day!



School Food Service Link.....

Quick Steps to 5 - 9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day at school...

Listed below are suggestions that you may choose at your own discretion

DOD (Department of Defense) Special:

- ✓ Raw Sweet Potatoes Sticks available from DOD
- ✓ Call Leslie Bowen to place orders: 1-800-795-3523

RECIPES:

- ✓ Try a new recipe with sweet potatoes ---
Sweet Potato-Plum Bread Squares (USDA B-18)
Sweet Potato Pie (USDA C-17)
Baked Sweet Potatoes and Apples (USDA I-7)
Orange Glazed Sweet Potatoes (USDA I-13)
Southern Sweet Potato Salad (see attached)
- ✓ Offer candied sweet potatoes
- ✓ Offer raw sweet potato sticks with low fat dip
- ✓ Serve baked sweet potato fries with ketchup or cinnamon sugar
- ✓ Feature a baked sweet potato instead of a white baked --- much healthier!
- ✓ Offer sweet potato pancakes for breakfast or lunch
- ✓ Serve "Two Tone Potatoes" --- Add 1 part mashed sweet potatoes to 4 parts white mashed
(Adds color and an exciting flavor!)

Presentation Meal Appeal -----

Package Food in Clear Plastic;
Styrofoam Hides the Food!

MARKETING:

- ✓ Contact the North Carolina SweetPotato Commission for ideas and resources:
Phone: 919-989-7323 www.ncsweetpotatoes.com
- ✓ Advertise and highlight the fruit or vegetable of the month on your menu
- ✓ Refer to "Fruits & Vegetables Galore" Kit (*Meal Appeal Manual*) page 9

Quality:

Do Not Refrigerate
Sweet Potatoes;
Store in Cool, Dry
Room at 55°-60°F

PROMOTIONS:

- ✓ Promote a "Sticker Day" with prizes on featured fruit/vegetable menu day,
Give this menu a special name (*Example: Sweet Potato--- Super Power!*)
- ✓ Feature "Orange Day" on the day that you offer sweet potato on your menu
 - ✓ Encourage the entire school to get involved
 - ✓ Reward students with a small prize if they are wearing orange
- ✓ Celebrate Sweet Potato Month, February, with a different recipe each week!
 - ✓ Order "Spencer Sweetpotato" dolls to give away.
(Available from the North Carolina SweetPotato Commission)
 - ✓ Feature a "Guess How Many Sweet Potatoes Are in the Pile" contest
(*"Guessing" posters are available from the North Carolina SweetPotato Commission*)
- ✓ Refer to "Fruits & Vegetables Galore" Kit (*Meal Appeal Manual*) pages 16-31

Safety:

Sanitize
Cutting Boards
After Each Task!!



School Food Service Link.....



School Food Service Recipes



Southern Sweet Potato Salad

Serving Size: **1/2 cup**

Yield: **25 servings**

1 serving=1/2 cup Fruit/Veg.

Ingredients:

4 lbs. Sweet Potatoes (Fresh), Peeled and Cut into 1/2 inch cubes

1/4 cup Lemon Juice

2 cups Mayonnaise

1/4 cup Orange Juice

2 tablespoons Honey

2 teaspoons Grated Orange Peel

1 teaspoon Ground Ginger

1/2 teaspoon Salt

1/4 teaspoon Ground Nutmeg

2 cups Sliced Celery

2/3 cup Chopped Dates

Directions:

In a saucepan, cook sweet potatoes in boiling water just until tender, about 5-8 minutes (do not overcook). Drain; toss with the lemon juice. In a large bowl, combine mayonnaise, orange juice, honey, orange peel, ginger, salt and nutmeg. Add the warm potatoes, celery and dates. Toss to coat well. Cover and chill.